

**Amendments to the Specification**

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 3, with the following rewritten paragraph:

As shown in Figure 1, the laser beam is focussed by the focussing lens 12 and directed onto the surface of the workpiece 16. In practice, however, as shown in Fig. 2, the laser beam 4 is defocussed at the surface of the workpiece, so that each laser pulse provides a laser shock peening ~~spot 24~~ spot 26 which may, for example, have a dimension in the lane of the treated surface of 2.5 to 7 mm.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 17, with the following rewritten paragraph:

The laser shock peening operation is performed ~~by a directing~~ by directing pulses of laser energy at the workpiece 16. Each pulse irradiates a small area of "spot" on the workpiece and the energy in the laser beam causes the opaque material in and adjacent to that area to vaporise to form a plasma, so causing an explosive impact on the surface of the workpiece to generate compressive stress in the surface region. After each pulse, the workpiece 16 is displaced to present a new area of the surface to the subsequent laser pulse. In this manner, a succession of laser pulses covers the entire surface of the workpiece 16 over which treatment is required.

Please replace the Abstract with the attached amended Abstract.